



Accessibility Advisory Committee

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October 3, 2016

Dear Chair Evans and Members of the Board,

It is my pleasure to present you with the Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC) report for the month of September 2016. The primary issues we reviewed were: 1) 7000-Series Railcar Dual Barrier Detectability Test; 2) Wi-Fi Network Pilot Program; and 3) MetroAccess Vehicle Safety demonstration.

Issues of the Month

7000-Series Railcar Dual Barrier Detectability Test

Metro conducted a testing session at the Greenbelt Metrorail station to observe customers who are blind or low-vision demonstrate their ability to detect between-car barriers on a train composed of 7000-series rail cars. Metro's new 7000-series rail cars have a dual between-car barrier design that includes the traditional link chain barrier and the clamshell style barrier made of rubber. The participants included AAC members as well as other disability community stakeholders.

The session included (1) a test of the participants' ability to navigate from the station entrance to the platform and safely onto the train, and (2) a test of the participants' ability to navigate from a random location on the platform to the edge of the platform and safely onto the train. During both tests, all participants were able to safely and successfully navigate onto the train without incident.

Metro received feedback from the participants and the AAC with regard to the barrier design. The feedback highlighted the importance of travel training and orientation and mobility (O&M) training for customers who are blind or low-vision using public transportation. Several comments pointed out that providing disability stakeholders with the opportunity to inform Metro on safety matters is a very positive step by the agency. Both barrier designs are accessible and compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), and while some participants viewed the wider barriers as more detectable, Metro found the new barrier design to be safe and effective for all customers, including those who are blind or low vision. The AAC recommended that to increase ridership and encourage more people with disabilities to use the fixed route system, Metro should continue to encourage travel training.

Wi-Fi Network Pilot Program

The AAC received a presentation on the Station Public Wi-Fi Pilot program. The pilot is designed to assess Metro's ability to provide Wi-Fi service at the platform level to allow customers to access travel information while in the system. The pilot will be available at the following stations: Archives, Gallery Place, Judiciary Square, L'Enfant Plaza, Metro Center, and Union Station. The Wi-Fi will operate as a shared service, similar to Wi-Fi

service offered in a neighborhood coffee shop. Connectivity and support for this Wi-Fi service is not guaranteed.

Although the AAC like the idea of adding Wi-Fi in the system, the AAC believes that the service does not go far enough. To add value and improve the customer experience, the AAC recommends that Metro add the service in the tunnels so customer can have service between stations. This is where customers have the most challenges. The AAC recommends that Metro partner with cellular companies to provide this connectivity. With this type of service, Metro could offer real-time feedback to customers and adding value to the customer experience and increase ridership.

The Wi-Fi service features a landing page with six icon images that include Metro Transit Police and Customer Service. The pilot was developed in-house, and currently lacks full accessibility per Section 508 compliance guidelines. The AAC is disappointed that Metro continues to develop and pilot projects that are not accessible to every customer. ADA is law and the guidelines for compliance are clear, have been in existence for years, and should be adhered to on any project. This will ensure that the pilot program and services are useful to all customers including those with disabilities. The AAC will continue to monitor the progress of the pilot program and recommends that Metro ensure that all future programs and services implemented in the system be fully compliant with the ADA.

MetroAccess Vehicle Safety Demonstration

To inform MetroAccess customers about safety practices, the AAC received a demonstration on vehicle pre-trip inspection procedures. The demonstration emphasized the importance of safety; highlighted vehicle safety features; and demonstrated the checks each operator performs prior to placing a MetroAccess vehicle in service. All MetroAccess vehicles are equipped with a DriveCam system. This camera system records specific events and the downloads are reviewed by the service delivery contractors for incident investigation and as a coaching tool in operator training.

Lastly, October is Disability Awareness Month. The AAC encourages Metro to reflect on the important role people with disabilities plays in public transportation. Reaffirming its commitment to providing high quality services to all customers, including those with disabilities, will add value and improve the customer experience. Good access is good business.

Sincerely,



Patrick Sheehan
Chair